

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LUSAKA 00940 090832Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
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AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN  
AMEMBASSY GABORONE  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA  
USUN NEW YORK 1231

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 0940

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, ZA, US, WAS  
SUBJ: SWAPO DISSIDENTS REQUEST US ASSISTANCE

SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS BEEN APPROACHED FOR ASSISTANCE BY SWAPO DISSIDENTS WHO CLAIM THEY HAVE BEEN CONFINED BY GRZ AT INTERMENT CAMP NEAR KABWE. UNHCR OFFICE IN LUSAKA HAS RECEIVED REPORTS SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE DISSIDENTS CONCERNING CONDITIONS IN THE CAMP AND GRZ MILITARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR CONFINING DISSIDENTS. UNHCR UNABLE TO ASSIST SWAPO DEFECTORS SINCE GRZ CONSIDERS THEM CRIMINALS. EMBASSY ANTICIPATES THAT AS WORD SPREADS OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S CONCERNS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE NUMBERS OF SWAPO DISSIDENTS APPEALING FOR ITS ASSISTANCE WILL INCREASE. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED REPORTS OF THE EXISTENCE OF A SWAPO INTERNMENT CAMP AT MBOROMA NEAR KABWE. THREE SWAPO DISSIDENTS, WHO CAME IN TO THE EMBASSY TO REQUEST ASSISTANCE THE END OF  
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PAGE 02 LUSAKA 00940 090832Z

MARCH, DESCRIBED THE CAMP AND ITS OPERATIONS. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS IS THEIR ACCOUNT. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO VERIFY ITS RELIABILITY, ALTHOUGH UNHCR LUSAKA OFFICE HAS HAD SIMILAR REPORTS. MBOROMA HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN AN ANC/ZIMBABWE CAMP; IN JUNE 1976 IT WAS TURNED OVER TO SWAPO AS A DETENTION CAMP. ITS MAIN PURPOSE HAS BEEN TO DETAIN NAMIBIANS ASSOCIATED WITH SHIPANGA. THE CAMP IS LOCATED IN AN ISOLATED RURAL AREA AND

SITUATED ON A SMALL HILL. IT IS UNFENCED, BUT MILITARY GUARDPOSTS SURROUND THE CAMP TO PREVENT ESCAPE. ZAMBIAN MILITARY MAN THE GUARDPOSTS. DETAINEES ARE REQUIRED TO BUILD THEIR OWN SHELTERS AND FORAGE FOR THEIR OWN FIREWOOD. MEDICAL ATTENTION IS PROVIDED BY DETAINEES WHO HAVE SOME MEDICAL TRAINING. SERIOUS ILLNESSES ARE HANDLED BY THE MEDICAL OFFICER ASSIGNED TO THE ZAMBIAN UNIT GUARDING THE CAMP. FOOD IS CONSTANTLY IN SHORT SUPPLY; MANY DETAINEES SUFFER FROM MALNUTRITION AND SOME HAVE DIED OF STARVATION. THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF PRISONERS WHO HAVE ESCAPED FROM THE CAMP; THOSE WHO ARE CAUGHT ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE ARE SEVERELY BEATEN. ON AUGUST 6, 1976 THE CAMP LEADERS DEMANDED TO BE ALLOWED TO ORGANIZE A MARCH TO LUSAKA TO SUBMIT A PETITION TO THE OAU FOR BETTER CONDITIONS. PERMISSION WAS GRANTED; THEN, WHEN THE MARCHERS WERE A FEW YARDS FROM THE CAMP, A ZAMBIAN MAJOR ORDERED HIS TROOPS TO FIRE ON THE MARCHERS. FOUR NAMIBIANS WERE KILLED AND TWELVE WOUNDED. THE REST OF THE MARCHERS WERE FORCED BACK INTO THE CAMP. IN AUGUST 1976 THERE WERE ABOUT 1,000 INTERNEES IN THE CAMP; IN MARCH 1977 THIS NUMBER HAD BEEN REDUCED TO 800 BY ESCAPE, STARVATION AND NATURAL DEATHS.

2. THE THREE MEN WHO APPROACHED THE EMBASSY FOR ASSISTANCE ARE SHIPANGA SUPPORTERS WHO WERE CONFINED AT MBOROMA IN AUGUST 1976. THE MOST ARTICULATE OF THE THREE SAID HE HAD ESCAPED FROM THE CAMP IN NOVEMBER 1976 AND HAD APPEALED TO THE OAU LIBERATION COMMITTEE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT CONDITIONS IN THE CAMP. HE WAS TURNED OVER FIRST TO SWAPO AND THEN TO THE ZAMBIAN MILITARY WHO RETURNED HIM TO THE CAMP WHERE HE WAS SEVERELY BEATEN. THE THREE MEN SAID THAT IN MARCH 1977  
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LUSAKA 00940 090832Z

THEY WERE ELECTED TO ATTEMPT AN ESCAPE, CARRYING WITH THEM DOCUMENTATION ON MISTREATMENT OF DETAINEES AND CONDITIONS IN THE CAMP. THE THREE TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THEY WANTED POLITICAL ASYLUM AND TO PUBLICIZE CONDITIONS IN THE CAMP AND THE MISTREATMENT THEY HAD RECEIVED AT THE HANDS OF THE ZAMBIANS. THE EMBOFF SAID THAT THE EMBASSY COULD NOT HELP THEM, BUT HE WOULD CHECK WITH THE UNHCR OFFICE IN LUSAKA.

3. EMBASSY UNHCR CONTACT HAD RECEIVED REPORTS ON CONDITIONS IN THE MBOROMA CAMP AND HIS SOURCES CITED THE SAME NUMBERS OF DETAINEES GIVEN BY THE THREE ESCAPEES AND THE FACT THE CAMP WAS GUARDED BY ZAMBIAN MILITARY. HE HAD ALSO HEARD REPORTS OF THE AUGUST 1976 SHOOTING INCIDENT. HOWEVER, THE UNHCR COULD OFFER NO ASSISTANCE TO THE THREE SINCE SWAPO DISSIDENTS ARE CONSIDERED TO BE CRIMINALS BY THE GRZ AND SWAPO. HE SAID THE EMBASSY SHOULD ADVISE THE ESCAPEES TO ATTEMPT TO GET TO ANOTHER COUNTRY AND APPROACH THE UNHCR OFFICE THERE WHICH MIGHT BE ABLE TO ASSIST THEM. THE EMBASSY PASSED THIS ADVICE TO THE THREE MEN.

4. THE EXISTENCE OF AND CONDITIONS IN THE SWAPO MBOROMA CAMP IS KNOWN TO AT LEAST ONE FOREIGN JOURNALIST RESIDENT IN LUSAKA. HE HAS HESITATED TO PUBLISH THE STORY OUT OF CONCERN FOR HIS RELATIONS WITH THE GRZ. WE SUSPECT THAT WITH PEOPLE ESCAPING FROM THE CAMP, THE STORY WILL REACH THE PUBLIC DOMAIN.

5. SECOND GROUP OF THREE NAMIBIANS APPROACHED CONSULWR SECTION ON APRIL 5 FOR ASSISTANCE IN GETTING SCHOLARSHIPS AND ASSISTANCE IN LEAVING ZAMBIA. THESE THREE SAID THEY HAD DESERTED FROM A SWAPO MILITARY CAMP IN ZAMBIA AND HAD DECIDED TO APPROACH THE AMERICAN EMBASSY FOR ASSISTANCE. THEY WERE TURNED AWAY BY EMBOFF WHO SAID THAT EMBASSY COULD NOT ASSIST THEM.

6. WE BELIEVE THAT REQUESTS FOR EMBASSY ASSISTANCE BY SOUTHERN AFRICAN LIBERATION GROUP MEMBERS, WHO ARE DISENCHANTED WITH THEIR MOVEMENTS, WILL INCREASE IN THE FUTURE, AS PRESIDENT CARTER'S SUPPORT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WORLDWIDE RECEIVES MORE  
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PAGE 04 LUSAKA 00940 090832Z

PUBLICITY. SEVERAL OF THE NAMIBIANS SAID THAT THEY HAD DECIDED TO APPROACH THE AMERICANS BECAUSE THEY HAD READ OF PRESIDENT CARTER'S STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN NEWS MAGAZINES.  
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DISSIDENTS WHO CLAIM THEY HAVE BEEN CONFINED BY GR  
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